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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the effectiveness of using teacher work sample methodology (TWSM) with special education teacher candidates seeking their first teaching license, noting that TWSM allows assessment of all eight special education outcomes. TWSM links the assessment steps in concrete ways, with teacher candidates accountable for planning assessment while also planning instruction. Candidates learn the TWSM process in the junior year and prepare more complete teacher work samples in their senior year. They are assigned to provide instruction to target students. Candidates have increased autonomy in their senior student teaching year and increased amounts of time with target students. Teacher work samples completed by interns and student teachers enable teacher educators to showcase candidates' competence. In recent years, senior-level candidates have reviewed their teacher work samples with a member of the local public schools immediately prior to a celebratory dinner on campus. The TWSM has been effective in assessing teacher candidate competence at the junior and senior levels in the special education licensure program, enabling candidates to describe their impact on student learning and enabling faculty to summarize the data by type of outcome for K-12 students. (SM)

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Evaluating the Use of Teacher Work Samples To Describe Teacher Candidate Competence And PK-12 Student Learning

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How do you know that a teacher graduate is ready to ensure K-12 student learning? What says the first-year teacher can make a difference in a classroom? In what ways can we as teacher educators showcase the support our interns provide to K-12 students before the interns assume responsibility for their own classrooms? These questions were central when I first began using teacher work sample methodology (TWSM) four years ago.

The use of multiple measures for assessment of learning is important. With multiple measures, we gain the richness of several perspectives, recognize the strengths of each individual, and can note growth over a period of time, create specific individual growth plans, acquire data from actual (authentic) performances in real world settings, and examine outcomes unique to each context. Several assessment strategies are available for us as we investigate learning. Among these, we can consider portfolios, checklists, anecdotal records, journals, photo essays, interviews, peer reviews, frequency or duration recordings, and running records. More recently, teacher work samples (TWS) have been described as an effective assessment tool (Girod, 2002).

Just as children watch the new kid in the neighborhood to discover how fast the newcomer can ride a bike or jump on a skate board, we teacher educators are asking "How effective is teacher work sample methodology(TWSM)?" In order to gain answers to that and related questions, I conducted a qualitative action research study during Fall 2002. This paper describes TWSM's effectiveness in a special education program for candidates seeking their first teaching license and follows the structure of a teacher work sample to tell the tale (Shalock, H. D., & Myton, D., 2002). I share this example with you as part of the reflective process I used to understand the use of TWSM in my teaching and learning. Although I was seeking my own understanding, you may gain insight to application of TWSM in your classrooms through this paper.

Introduction to the Course and Intern Assignment

I use TWSM in two courses; one is a fall semester junior special education methods course, and the other is the special education student teaching block taught in the spring. Fall 2002 was the fourth fall I had used TWS in the junior methods class. The class is scheduled to meet three times a week, MWF from 10 – 11:45. We meet on campus every Monday. We meet at the local high school on Wednesdays and Fridays where each teacher candidate is assigned a secondary level student with special needs. At the high school, the teacher candidate is considered an intern for the semester. The intern provides individual instruction or supports large group instruction from 10:00 – 11:10. All interns meet with me from 11:15 – 11:45 to process the day's events, hear a K-12 personnel as speaker, continue instructional experiences, or to hear intern presentations.

This year interns were assigned to target students in mathematics, English, social studies, physical education, health, family and consumer science, and business courses. The interns provided 576 hours of instruction to the targeted students or 36 hours to each individual target student. There is no spring semester course to continue the support. During the first quarter, I make informal, unannounced observations to each intern. I

make scheduled visits to observe the interns teaching from a self-written plan during the second half of the semester. The interns receive written feedback from both observations. Additionally, we schedule a post-lesson conference following the formal observation.

All of the interns have experienced two semesters of a sophomore-level student assisting. For most of the interns, both placements were at the local elementary school, however two had served as teacher assistants at the high school. These sophomore assignments are for five hours a week per semester, typically during the same hour block each day. Teacher assistants serve a variety of students.

Context for Field Experience

The Crete Public Schools have approximately 1,300 students in grades K-12. The district runs a large bus route in rural Nebraska. The patrons approved a bond issue in Fall 2002 for building a middle school scheduled to open in Fall 2004. Currently, both high school and middle school are in one building. This year the middle and high school operated on totally different bell schedules.

There are four special education teachers serving the combined middle school and high school population. One of these teachers serves as the partnership coordinator. The college faculty member asks teacher candidates to complete an information form in the spring. The partnership coordinator uses information on these forms to assign the intern to the targeted student with special needs.

The middle level and high school building is approximately four blocks from campus. Most candidates have just 15 minutes to move from their campus class to the public school. They share rides and must dress professionally for their earlier class in order to be on time. This year the public school used photo ID badges; all Doane interns received a Crete Public Schools security ID badge.

Teacher Candidate's Expected Learning Outcomes

The ten outcomes for all teacher candidates in the Doane education unit and the eight special education outcomes are listed below. Both sets of outcomes are explicated with rubrics clarifying levels of performance for each outcome. Because this course is completed only by candidates majoring in special education, the candidates refer to the special education outcomes in their journals.

1. Understands Content: The developing professional understands the content knowledge of the discipline(s).
2. Understands Development : The developing professional understands how children learn and develop, and provides opportunities supporting intellectual, social, and personal growth.
3. Understands Differences: The developing professional recognizes and provides for individual differences and diversity.

4. Designs Instructional Strategies: The developing professional uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of skills and strategies for critical thinking and problem solving.
5. Manages and Motivates: The developing professional uses classroom management and motivational strategies to create a positive learning environment.
6. Communicates: The developing professional applies knowledge of effective communication techniques.
7. Plans: The developing professional utilizes effective planning techniques.
8. Assesses: The developing professional understands and uses a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies.
9. Reflects on Practice: The developing professional is a reflective practitioner who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
10. Participates in the Professional Community: The developing professional fosters relationships with school colleagues, families, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well being.

The special education outcomes specifically guide instruction and assessment for majors in special education. The EdS 328 processes and products are linked to the special education outcomes. These outcomes are presented below. Each special education outcome is connected to at least one of the Doane Education Department outcomes. To satisfactorily complete this course, students should be able to achieve each outcome at the basic level or above. The special education outcomes are:

1. To use research-based best practice models for effective teaching and learning.
2. To assist student with the support of parents and other professional in planning for transition to adulthood, including employment, community, and daily life.
3. To use, adapt, and modify existing assessment tools and methods to accommodate the unique abilities and needs of all students.
4. To use direct instruction and infuse social skills instruction needed for education and functional living environments.
5. To make instructional decisions and plan individual programs that result in appropriate placement and intervention for all individuals with exceptional learning needs.
6. To use performance data and information from teachers, other professionals, individuals with exceptionalities, and parents to make or suggest appropriate modification in learning environments.
7. To promote and maintain a high level of competence and integrity in the practice of the profession.
8. To communicate and collaborate with general educators, paraprofessionals, parents, and other school/community personnel.

Planned Assessment Strategies

I use multiple assessment strategies in the course. One strength of the teacher work sample is that it allows assessment of all eight special education outcomes. This holistic perspective of an intern's performance shows strengths, reveals dispositions in journals and reflective statements, and shows growth across time. Along with reflective

journals, an in-class exam, observations of informal and formal lessons, book discussions, presentations on candidate selected topics related to special education content, and written papers such as sample IEPs, lesson designs, and further investigations of presentation topics form a complete picture of candidate capacity.

Furthermore, I use a second TWS as a candidate product in their senior-level student teaching. The comparison of the junior-level and senior-level teacher work sample shows the teacher candidate's growth. The senior-level student teachers' understanding of TWSM allows to showcase their competence

Teacher Candidate's Performance at Course Start

At the start of the start of the junior year, most candidates have successfully met the Nebraska minimum competency basic skills requirements measured by the PPST. At Doane, candidates who have not achieved the minimum state scores may enroll in professional education courses during the fall semester of their junior year. In Fall 2002, three of the 16 candidates needed to achieve the minimum scores in at least one of the PPST areas. During the fall, two succeeded and the third was supported in a decision to pursue a major outside of professional education.

Assessment yields information for public accountability and data-based decision for improvement. Simplistic measures or single assessments do not address the complexity of teaching skills (Cochran-Smith, 2003). This is true for the skills of pre-service teachers as well as in-service practitioners. In order to address that complexity, Doane like many AACTE member institutions uses several measures to determine the competence of teacher candidates. Beyond the state-mandated test of basic skills, recommendations from the public school practitioners who supervise early field experiences, education and liberal arts faculty; GPA in major, professional education, and all courses; and the state-required felony background check are among the most prominent. In a typical year, as many as 20 % of the students enrolled in sophomore level professional education courses are not eligible to continue.

The most significant attrition time in teacher education is between the sophomore and junior year. PPST scores, faculty evaluations based on performance in courses and observed lessons, and GPA in major, professional education and overall provide a second tier assessment of their performance. By the junior level, candidates have completed at least four faculty observed lessons with a following critique. These all contribute to a positive prediction about their capacity to serve as a special education intern.

I can make three statements about the entry-level performance of the teacher candidates in EdS 328. The candidates are capable with some classroom assisting experience As a result of the junior-level status of the candidates in this course and the breadth of knowledge, skills, and dispositions assessed through multiple strategies. Years of experience have also identified the pattern that most of the special education majors have a double major in elementary education. Consequently, they have a high level of apprehension about the intern assignment at the middle or high school level. Finally, this

intern assignment serves as a valued professional growth experience for candidates. Each year at least one develops a professional drive to work with middle or high school level.

Instructional Plan

In the junior year EdS 328 course, the candidates are not familiar with teacher work sample methodology. I begin by focusing on the first four sections which I describe as introductory and planning. The implementation log is on-going and the final sections are completed at the end of the semester. I organize the course so that we spend one block of learning experiences on each section of the teacher work sample. This feels like appropriate instructional policy as the teacher work sample methodology relates to all eight of the special education outcomes. In this paper, I have provided a glimpse of experiences for each TWS component.

Introduction to the Student

One of the key pieces in the introduction to a student with special needs is the verification. My course calendar notes several days of applying past knowledge about definitions and characteristics of students with special needs to the Nebraska state verification criteria.

One sample TWS I share in this review has the teacher candidate describing herself as the student. This reveals the important transition between student and teacher roles that occurs during the initial licensure preparation. It also alerts me that I must be more deliberate in my instruction for this section.

Context for Learning

Students are encouraged to gather information for this section during their first day in the class. They have a list of information to collect established in the TWS rubric. Another reason I prepare students to observe for specific data is that the partnership coordinator may not have received permission from the target student's parents for the intern to begin individual instruction with their child.

Student Learning Outcomes

For this section, we refer to Lignugaris/Kraft, Marchland-Martella, and Martella (2001), a research-based best practice, to guide the format of our special education goals and objectives. This format is the same as examples given by the Nebraska Department of Education, although the component labels vary. The teacher candidates may pull objectives from the IEP or they may write a new objective that supports the ones stated in the IEP.

Dohrn, 2002 describes five types of special education work samples according to the K-12 students' outcomes. In Fall 2002, EdS 328 target students had academic, functional work, and social/behavioral outcomes, but they did not have any unit work or collaborative outcomes.

Strategies to Determine Student's Accomplishment of the Goals

Candidates should list the assessment activities they or their cooperating teacher will use to show K-12 student learning. Candidates use Thompson, Quenemoen, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (2001) and other pieces on alternative assessments to broaden their assessment skills. We generate a long list of assessment strategies and then discuss which strategies they can use as a student assistant. We identify strategies currently in use in classrooms and strategies they can implement without significantly changing the students' instructional experiences. A partial list of the strategies we developed included: anecdotal records, frequency tallies, duration, running logs, partial interval, whole interval, behavior observation forms, portfolios, running records, teacher tests, student oral reports or presentations, student written papers or projects, daily work assignments, interviews with students, and daily progress reports.

Student's Performance Level at Beginning of Instructional Unit

Interns use their own observations as a primary source. They also refer to the student's IEP and get information from the cooperating teacher. Student's daily work samples from the first weeks of the intern assignment also provide information about the student's performance at the internship initiation.

Instructional Plan

Because this methods course is offered in the middle of the candidates' professional preparation, I begin by drawing on the experiences from the sophomore year. Brainstorming, review from past classes, and descriptions of favorite lessons they recall all generate a long list of instructional strategies. I also share with the candidates examples of past candidate work samples. These samples are generally drawn from senior year experiences. In order to give the interns more control of their learning, I assigned them to self-select a journal article about instructional strategies. In class, the candidates reported on the readings in small groups, and then offered summaries of the strategies most likely to result in K-12 student learning *in the current intern assignments.* This required the candidates to evaluate the strategies for *application in the semester's intern assignment.*

The interns have limited decision making responsibility for the instructional strategies used in this class. The cooperating teacher is in full control of the classrooms. Some cooperating teachers send the intern and target student to the school's media center for 1:1 instruction. In some instances, interns working in the media center pair up for small group work.

Implementation Log

The interns have journaled regularly in education courses during the sophomore year. I spot check the daily implementation logs throughout the term, and collect reflective journals three times throughout the semester. Again, I use a rubric for evaluation of the reflective journals.

Evidence of Your Impact on the Student's Learning

As I instruct candidates about their internship expectations, this piece about accountability for learning and ways to document presents a new orientation for them.

Assessment as a process focuses on student achievement. This increased focus on students learning as a result of teacher or intern behavior places the interns in a position of accountability. I give very specific instructions for items to be assembled in the TWS. I suggest Xerox copies of student work; notes from the student, the teacher, or the student's parents; records of observations according to the assessment strategies listed in an earlier section and selected by the intern. There may be daily attendance reports or reports of daily grades.

Implementation Log

My course implementation log follows the activities as described in the instruction plan. This was enhanced by student presentations, guest panel discussions, and structured discussions all linking to the eight special education outcomes

One memorable late October morning I had a high school hallway conversation with the partnership coordinator. She had just had a meeting with the principal who asked her to present student achievement information to the members of the school board at its November meeting. She has adjusted curriculum 7^{th} – 12^{th} grade courses for students with behavior disorders, learning disabilities, and mild mental handicap. She was very concerned about the performance data she could provide. For many of her students, she designs lessons to maintain their existing reading skills. Their acquisition of new skills is subtle and is not shown on standardized tests. Later that morning, one of my intern students asked me how she would document student achievement for her TWS. I was struck by the authenticity of the intern's question as it was the same question the partnership coordinator had asked just two hours earlier.

Evidence of Impact on Teacher Candidate's Learning

The first piece of evidence I offer to you is the teacher work samples you are examining this afternoon. I have four copies of the work samples prepared by five different teacher candidates.

Job placement is another piece of evidence. In the last five years, 71 candidates have completed their special education teaching license through Doane's program. At this time 70 of these are teaching and one is in graduate school preparing for a specialized license in a state other than Nebraska. These beginning teachers are offered continuing contracts.

Approximately one-third of Doane's initial license graduates complete graduate studies with us. Their graduate course participation and products for classroom application document their ability to promote student achievement.

Reflections for Change

- Emphasize intern's role as teacher and K-12 student as student,
- Revise label on rubric from Strategies to Determine Student's Accomplishment of Goals to Assessment Strategies I Plan to Use,

- schedule required faculty review, especially of the first six sections in addition to peer review at check points and voluntary faculty review,
- Select proficient examples and make multiple copies of these to share with interns in Fall 2003,
- Revise rubric for first reflective journal according to pattern developed with interns for second and third reflective journals,
- Notebook of target student IEPs for intern reference

Conclusions

Teacher work sample methodology is an effective process for showcasing candidate competence and student learning. Given the recognized need for multiple assessments, TWS describe the candidate's ability to ensure K-12 student learning in at least one setting.

Teacher work sample links the assessment steps in a concrete way. Teacher candidates are accountable for planning assessment while they also plan instruction. This helps to ensure coherence in the teaching-learning process. In actual practice, candidates asked the same questions as experienced teachers. How do we show learning in reading skills and comprehension for adolescents with special needs? The audiences were different, but the need for assessment data and results was the same. The intern was reporting to me, the experienced teacher to the principal and the school board.

Candidates learn the teacher work sample process in the junior year and prepare more complete teacher work samples in their senior year. One difference is the increased autonomy candidates have in their senior student teaching. Another difference is the increased amount of time student teachers are with the target student. Of course, they are closer to job application and interviews so they prepare a TWS that might be reviewed by a interviewer.

Teacher work samples completed by interns and student teachers enable teacher educators to show case the candidates' competence. For the last two years, senior-level candidates have reviewed their TWS with a member of the local public schools immediately prior to a celebratory dinner on campus. This year I am offering a TWS review to the junior-level partnership coordinator.

In summary, I have found TWSM an effective strategy for assessing teacher candidate competence at the junior and senior-level in a special education licensure program. The methodology enables candidates to describe their impact on student learning. Faculty can summarize this data by type of outcome for the K-12 student and aggregate data for courses.

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EdS 328 Rubric for Teacher Work Sample

Teacher Work Sample	Distinguished	Adequate
(a) Introduction to the K-12 Student	Grade Level Verification/Identification Services Provided IEP Goals & Objectives Supplementary Goals & Obj Protects student identity	Grade level Verification Services provided IEP goals and objectives
(b) Context for Learning	Student's full schedule is present. More than one class is described: number of students, gender of students, inclusive or self-contained, number of adults present, first language Difficulty of level of work for the monitored student All learning environments are described (classrooms, job sites, or others).	Class during observation is described: number of students, gender, inclusive or self-contained, number of adults
(c) Student's Expected Learning Outcomes	Linked to IEP goals and objectives Linked to Supplementary Goals and Objectives Reasonable Expectations for time interval of candidate placement Challenging for length of unit	
(d) How I plan to assess student learning .	Regular formative assessment document teacher and students collaborative monitoring of learning and adjustments in teaching/learning strategies.	Regular formative assessment used for grading.
(e) Student's Level of Performance at Beginning of Instructional Unit	One measure of current learning for each outcome stated in (c) above Direct measures – observations & student products More than one measure used to sample student learning	
(f) Instructional Plan	Instruction for class and modifications for the individual student. Classroom Management Plan and modifications for the individual student. Assessment Plan for class and modifications for the individual student. Modifications all related to student's needs and appropriate to handicap.	Instructional plan for the class. Classroom Management Plan. Assessment Plan for the class.
(g) Implementation log	Complete sentences describe the actions of the student and the student assistant in relation to the stated learning outcomes.	Bulleted items indicate the activities. CPS Professional staff document student assistant's presence in the classroom.

	Student assistant is actively involved with the CPS student learning. Time is distributed throughout the semester to have longitudinal impact on student learning.	
(h) Evidence of your impact on the student's learning	Reflective statement on student learning by the student Student work samples – originals or Xeroxed copies. Note from the student, teacher, or parent affirming your impact on the student learning. Observations at end of learning unit to compare with observations at beginning of learning unit.	Reflective statement on student learning. Student work samples. Note from the student, teacher, or parent affirming your impact on the student learning.
(i)Reflections on change for future teaching/learning	Reflections for this student and a broader reflection on students with disabilities by student assistant Reflections on this content and curriculum beyond this one content area.	Reflections for this student and similar students. Reflections on this content area and similar goals and objectives.
Grammar, Usage, Mechanics, and Spelling **Form and Style** **Note: See Doane College Writing Rubric**	Few errors Narrative sections are keyboarded. Classroom observations are authentic; narratives are added to clarify for interpretation. Sections are easily identified. Coherence in student outcomes, strategies, and assessments.	Regular errors. Handwritten notes. Classroom observations are presented with minimal interpretation.
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